



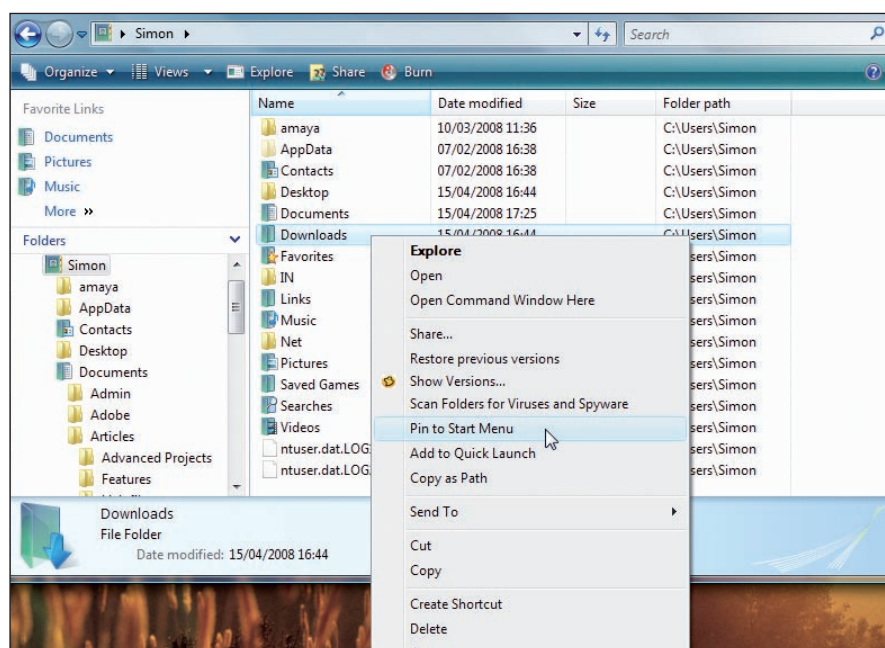
Will Head helps you get more from Microsoft's latest OS in part two of his guide

Welcome to part two of our Windows Vista Tips collection. As with last month's feature, we've categorised these power tips into Customisation; Performance; Files and Folders; and Security and Networking.

Whether you're a seasoned user or a Vista virgin, you'll find something here to improve your experience of Microsoft's latest version of Windows. We've also indicated the tips that are suitable for beginners and those intended for more advanced users. Look out for some useful

performance-boosting tips – such as harnessing the power of a dual-core processor – and ways to reduce the burden that Vista places on your system. If you simply can't get your head around how Vista's file-sharing works, we'll even show you how to revert to the Windows XP method.

CUSTOMISATION



ADD FOLDERS TO THE START MENU

Level Advanced

Windows Vista version All

The items in the Start menu change depending on which applications you use most often. Above this dynamic list are further entries called Internet and Email; these are pinned in place at the top and never change, but if you would like to specify additional items to pin at the top of the Start menu then you can do it simply by right-clicking them.

First you need to open the Registry Editor. Type regedit into the Start menu search box. Navigate to the key called HKey_Clases_Root\Folder\shellex\ContextMenuHandlers. Click on the ContextMenuHandlers key in the tree on the left and then choose New, then Key from the Edit menu. Rename the key {a2a9545d-a0c2-42b4-9708-a0b2badd77c8} and then exit the Registry Editor. Press Shift and right-click an application and a new option appears called Pin to Start Menu. Select it and your item will now appear in the list of static items at the top. To remove an item, right-click on it in the list and choose Unpin from Start Menu.

ILLUSTRATION: MAGICTORCH

▲ Pin frequently used folders to the Start menu via a handy Registry tweak



▲ Gadgets don't have to live in the sidebar – you can put them on your desktop too

MOVE SIDEBAR GADGETS ON TO THE DESKTOP

Level: Beginner

Windows Vista version: All

The sidebar in Vista is great for providing quick access to information, but it works best with widescreen displays, where there is additional space at the side for it to sit. If your display uses a standard-aspect ratio, or has a particularly low resolution, the sidebar can take up a significant portion of your desktop space. However, you can free your gadgets from the confines of the

sidebar area and place them freely across your desktop. Simply hover over a gadget on the sidebar and grab it by the handle that appears in the top right-hand corner. Drag and drop it wherever you want it on the desktop.

You can even close the sidebar (right-click on an empty space and click Close Sidebar) and your desktop-bound gadgets will remain in view. If you want to see them without minimising all your windows, just hold down the Windows key and press the spacebar and they'll be brought to the front.

LAUNCH WEBSITES QUICKLY FROM THE ADDRESS BAR

Level: Beginner

Windows Vista version: All

Add the Address bar to your taskbar and you can access websites quickly just by entering the URL. Right-click the taskbar, choose the Toolbars option and select the Address entry. Make the taskbar double height so you don't lose any space for running applications.



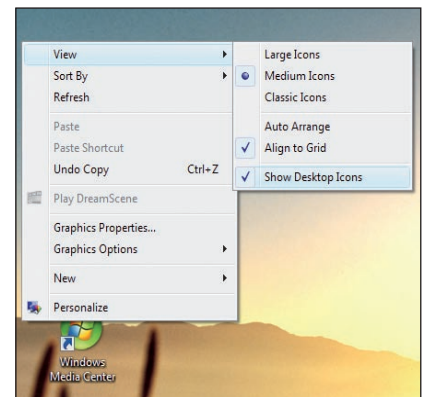
◀ The address bar (at the bottom of the screen) provides quick access to websites

CLEAR THE DESKTOP

Level: Beginner

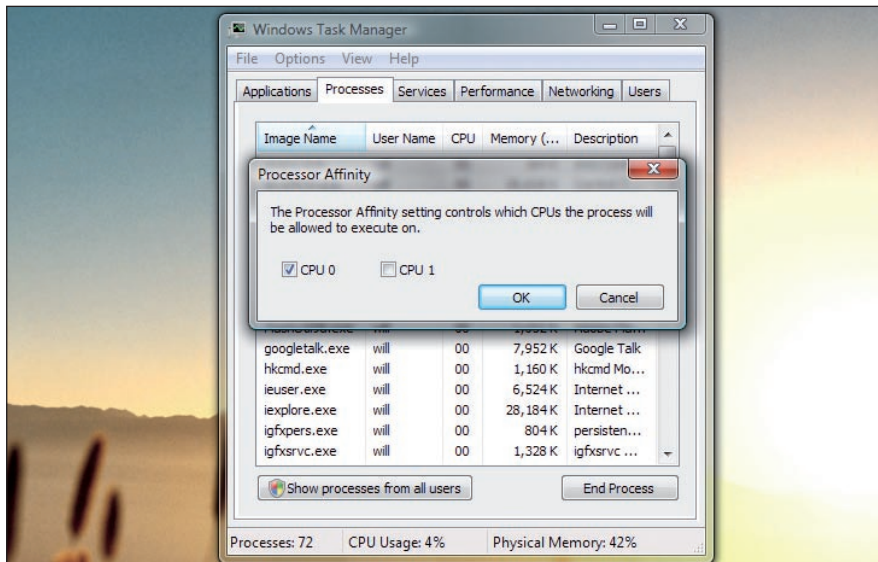
Windows Vista version: All

There's relatively little clutter on the desktop of a freshly installed Vista system but, after you've added a few applications, you can end up with shortcuts and files all over the place. It looks cluttered and messy. While you could delete all the icons and start again, they're sometimes useful to have around. Instead, you can hide them so they aren't displayed on the desktop but are still accessible through Windows Explorer. Right-click on the desktop, select View and then untick Show Desktop Icons from the menu. To turn them back on, simply repeat the procedure and tick Show Desktop Icons.



▲ Tidy up your desktop by hiding the icons. You can still access them through Explorer

PERFORMANCE



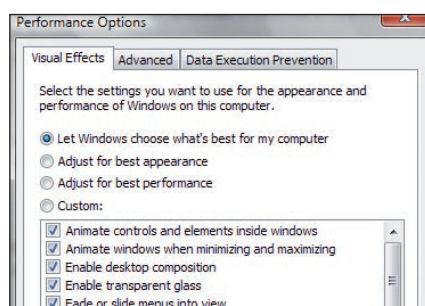
▲ Reign in processor-hogging applications by limiting them to one processor

TWEAK MULTIPROCESSOR SETTINGS

Level: Advanced

Windows Vista version: All

If your machine is less than a year old, the chances are it has a dual-core processor. In theory this should speed up most applications, since there are two chips to do the calculations. However, in order for this to function the workload has to be divided and passed to each processor core. In some cases the computer can slow down if a program is hogging both cores. You can tell Vista to allocate only one core to the program, which frees the other core to undertake different tasks. To do this, right-click on an empty space on the taskbar and select Task Manager from the context menu. Click on the Processes tab and then look at the column marked CPU to see if anything is using a large amount of processing power. To change the setting, right-click on the process and select Set Affinity, choose which core you want to handle the process, untick the other one and click OK.



▲ If your PC is struggling with Vista's graphical flourishes, tweak the GUI to ease the burden

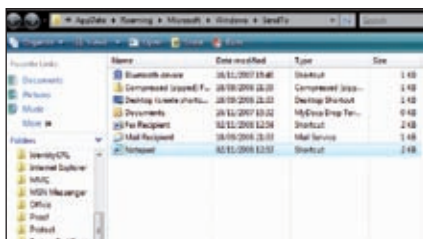
CHANGE VISTA'S APPEARANCE TO OPTIMISE SPEED

Level: Intermediate

Windows Vista version: All except Home Basic

If you have upgraded an older machine that wasn't built with Vista in mind, some of the visual features may cause a serious reduction in performance. If you're not bothered about how Windows looks, you can use the Classic interface, which is less demanding. Right-click on the desktop, choose Personalize and then Theme. Select Windows Classic from the Theme drop-down menu.

If you still want the new interface but are willing to sacrifice some of the effects, you can tweak the Vista Aero interface to suit your PC. Open Control Panel and select System and Maintenance, followed by System. Choose 'Advanced system settings' in the left-hand column and then click the Settings button in the Performance section of the Advanced tab. For a quick fix, select Adjust for the best performance. If you want to experiment, try turning off various features to see what difference it makes. The ones that will have the most effect include those that involve fading, sliding or animation.



▲ Add additional applications to the SendTo menu

CUSTOMISE YOUR SENDTO MENU**Level Intermediate****Windows Vista version All**

When you right-click on any file, you should see a submenu called SendTo. This allows you to perform quick operations on the file, such as copying it to another hard disk, sending it by email or compressing it in a Zip file. You can add your own shortcuts to this menu to extend what it can do. For example, add a shortcut to

Notepad and you can use SendTo to open files with it quickly, regardless of their file extension.

Every user on a Vista system has their own SendTo folder. To find yours, type the following into the Start menu search box and press Return: %APPDATA%\Microsoft\Windows\SendTo. This will open a Windows Explorer window. To add Notepad, create a shortcut to it in this folder, after which it will show up as an item on your SendTo menu.

TURN AERO ON OR OFF QUICKLY**Level Intermediate****Windows Vista version All except Home Basic**

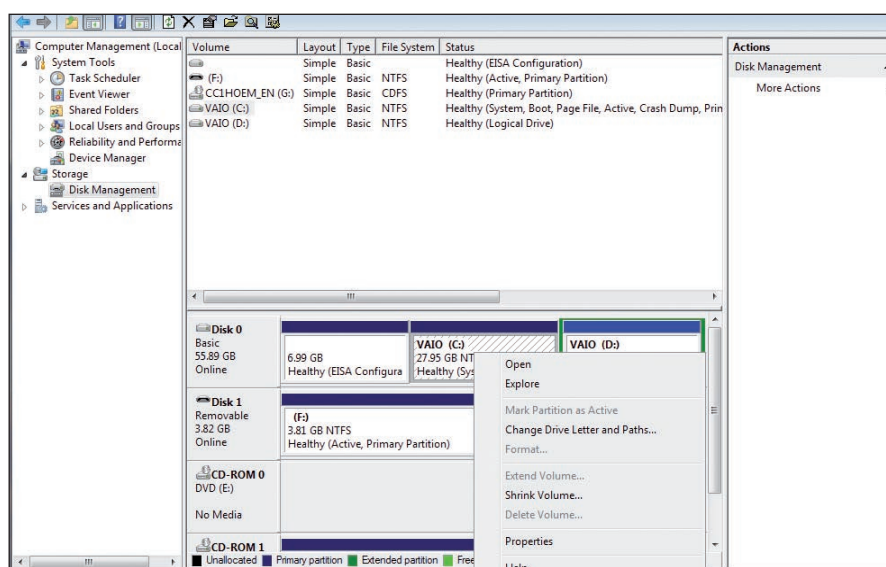
Although Vista's Aero interface is nice to look at, there are times when you might want to disable it to conserve your computing resources for other tasks. You can do this by opening the Personalization section in the Control Panel and clicking on Windows Color and Appearance. However, it's a fairly long-winded process.

Alternatively, you can switch Aero on and off via a shortcut. Right-click on your desktop (or wherever you want to save it) and choose Shortcut from the New submenu. In the box that says Type the location of the item, enter rundll32.exe dwmapi #104. Call the shortcut Aero Off. To create one to turn it back on, repeat the procedure but this time enter rundll32.exe dwmapi #102. Call this one Aero On. To activate it, double-click the shortcut.



▲ Aero looks nice, but sometimes it pays to turn it off when you need all your PC's resources

FILES AND FOLDERS



▲ Vista can now resize hard disk partitions without destroying all the data on them

RESIZE PARTITIONS**Level Advanced****Windows Vista version All**

Resizing disk partitions used to involve buying specialist tools or spending a day backing up your entire system before wiping the partition table and starting from scratch. Vista has built-in tools to help you resize partitions without destroying all the data on the disk. However, modifying the partitions on a disk is still a fairly major operation, so make sure you have a copy of any important files before you start.

Open the Computer Management console by entering Computer Management into the search box on the Start menu and pressing Enter. On the left-hand side, find and open the Storage entry and click on the Disk Management entry. In the middle pane you'll see a graphical view of the disks and partitions on your system. To change a partition's size, right-click on the one you want to modify and choose Extend Volume or Shrink Volume to change its size.

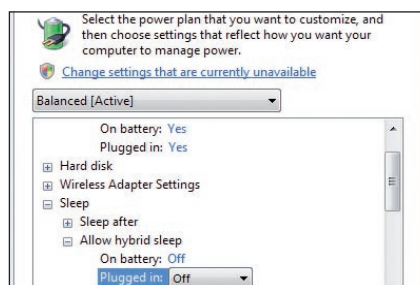
DISABLE HYBRID SLEEP**Level Intermediate****Windows Vista version All**

In addition to the normal sleep and hibernate modes that are available in XP, Vista introduces a new one called hybrid sleep, combining benefits from both. Sleep mode requires electricity to maintain the contents of the RAM, so if the power is cut, data is lost. Hibernate, on the other hand, saves the RAM contents to disk so it can withstand a power cut. However, it takes longer to resume as the information has to be reloaded into the memory. Hybrid sleep offers the best of both worlds by saving the RAM contents before sleeping, so if the power is lost you can still restore your previous work session.

Hybrid sleep is slower than a normal sleep, though, and if you're running a laptop with a battery then it's unlikely you'll encounter a power cut unless you take the battery out. If that's the case and you want to disable hybrid sleep, select Power Options from the Hardware

and Sound section of the Control Panel. Click the Change plan settings link under the currently selected power plan and then choose Change advanced power settings.

Scroll through the list of options available and click the + button to the left of Sleep to expand the options. Expand the Allow hybrid sleep option and choose Off for both the On battery and Plugged in entries, then click OK.



▲ Turn off the new hybrid sleep mode

CHANGE THE DEFAULT POWER BUTTON**Level Intermediate****Windows Vista version All**

Before Vista, Windows encouraged you to shut down your PC after use, but now it defaults to sleep mode rather than off. This means it can restart quicker, but it requires some power to keep the contents of the memory refreshed. If you're concerned about electricity usage, you can select Shutdown from the extended list on the Start menu, but there's a quicker way.

You can change the behaviour of the Start menu's Off button by opening the Control Panel and selecting Power Options from the Hardware and Sound section. Click Change plan settings under your current power selection and then choose Change advanced power settings. Scroll down to the Power buttons and lid entry and click the + to the left to expand the selection. Find the Start menu power button entry and choose Sleep, Hibernate or Shutdown the computer.

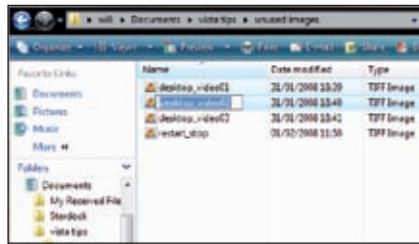


QUICK RENAME

Level Beginner

Windows Vista version All

If you're renaming lots of files in the same folder, speed things up by using the Tab key after each change instead of Enter. The next filename will be highlighted automatically, ready for you to edit. You can move down a long list of files in this way, which is faster than choosing each file individually, right-clicking and choosing Rename, or even pressing F2 to rename it.



▲ Hit Tab, rather than Enter, after renaming a file to select the next in the list

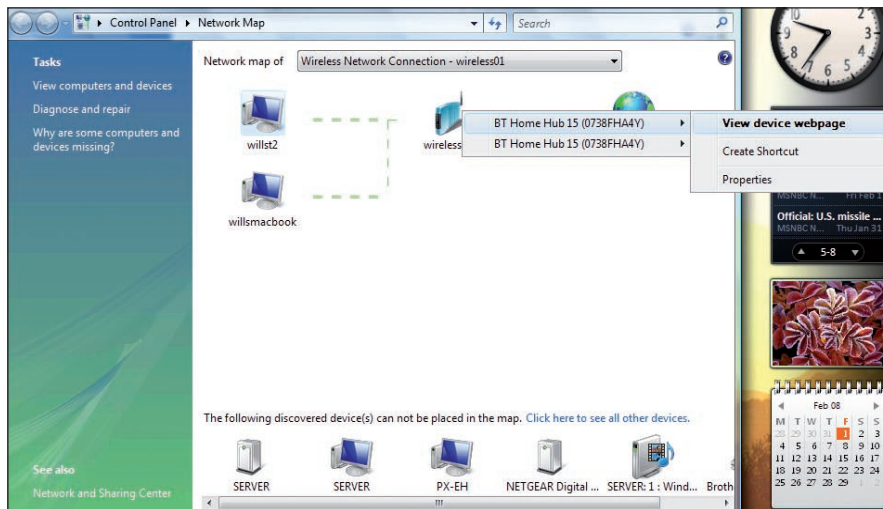
SHARE FOLDERS THE XP WAY

Level Intermediate

Windows Vista version All

Windows Vista introduces a new way to share folders on your network. It is supposedly easier to use but, if you just can't fathom how it works, you can go back to the XP way. Instead of selecting the Share option when you right-click on a folder, choose Properties. Go to the Sharing tab and then click the Advanced Sharing button. You'll then be presented with the XP interface.

SECURITY AND NETWORKING



▲ If you can't remember the address for your router's administration page, you can easily find it by using Vista's Network Map

FIND YOUR ROUTER'S HOMEPAGE

Level Beginner

Windows Vista version All

You don't often need to change your router's settings, which means that when you do, you can never remember the address of its admin page. Typically it will be something difficult to recall such as <http://192.168.1.254>. If you desperately need to tweak some settings, but are at a loss as to where you should point your browser, then Vista can help.

Open the Control Panel and select Network and Sharing Center from the Network and Internet section. In the top right-hand corner, above the diagram showing your network, click the 'View full map' link. This will show you a graphical view of all the devices on your network and how they're connected. Locate your router (it'll be the one closest to the internet, on the right-hand side), right-click on it and choose Go to Device Home Page.

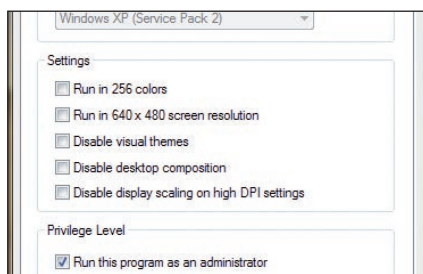
ALWAYS LAUNCH PROGRAMS WITH ADMINISTRATOR PRIVILEGES

Level Intermediate

Windows Vista version All

When you run a program in Windows, it's best to allow it as few security privileges as possible. However, there are some programs that frequently require administrator control so it's useful to be able to launch them with advanced privileges by default, avoiding tedious security warning pop-ups.

The easiest way to do this is to create a new shortcut to the program, right-click on it and select Properties. On the Compatibility tab in the Privilege Level section, select Run this program as an administrator. If the box is greyed out so you can't select it, click the Show settings for all users button at the bottom first. Click OK, and the next time you launch the program from your new shortcut it will run with full administrator privileges.



▲ If you always need administrator privileges, create a dedicated shortcut

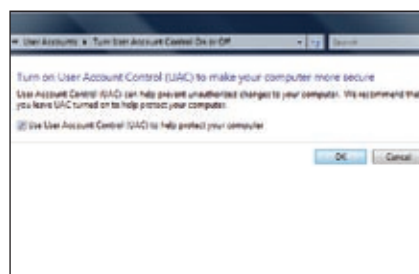
TURN OFF USER ACCOUNT CONTROL

Level Advanced

Windows Vista version All

User Account Control (UAC) is a security measure that limits access to important system configuration changes. If you want to make a significant change to the way Vista works, you have to confirm the change. While this can prevent unwanted software such as spyware making changes, some people find it to be intrusive and annoying. However, you can turn off UAC to make changes without interruption.

Open the Control Panel and click on User Accounts and Family Safety. On the next window, click on User Accounts and look for the option at the bottom of the list called Turn User Account Control On or Off. Click this, untick the box labelled Use User Account Control (UAC) to help protect your computer and restart. You'll no longer be asked to confirm changes.



▲ If you find UAC more hassle than it's worth, you can disable it

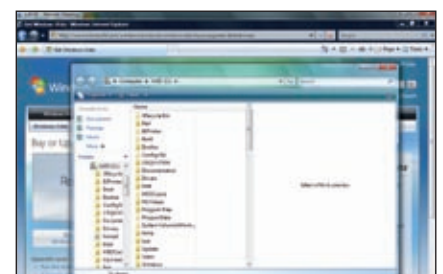
ACCESS YOUR FILES IN REDUCED FUNCTIONALITY MODE

Level Intermediate

Windows Vista version All

If you purchased Vista and installed it on your PC, you have to activate it within a certain amount of time or it will stop working fully and run in Reduced Functionality Mode. The default amount of time before this happens is 30 days, but you can extend that three times (see Extend Vista Activation Time in Windows Vista Tips, *Shopper* 244). If you've run out of extensions you'll find the capabilities of Reduced Functionality Mode extremely limiting.

If you have decided Vista isn't for you, you can still access your files and copy them. To do this, enter C: into the Internet Explorer address bar. Click Allow on the security warning and you'll be presented with a standard Windows Explorer window. You can now access your files and copy them to a flash drive. **CS**



▲ If you've run out of time to evaluate Vista, you can still rescue your files